Program Review Policy

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I. Introduction and Purpose

A. Program Review at Sonoma State University provides Departments and programs the opportunity to evaluate their curricula and their success at helping students achieve stated learning objectives. Regular reflection and assessment are necessary for effective long-term planning, resource allocation, and for continuing to build a viable University. The program review process brings together self-reflection and relevant evidence to explore the current state of academic programs and to set directions for the future.

B. The program review process is faculty-driven and is intended to be open and participatory. It relies on the engagement of the faculty, staff, administration, and students. Assessment approaches should reflect the uniqueness of each discipline and Department culture and should enable Departments and programs to make evidence-based decisions about curricula, Department structure, and resource needs.

II. The Process of Program Review

A. Each academic unit engages in the program review process once every five years. Programs which are externally accredited may conduct their program review on a cycle that is consistent with their external accreditation cycle. Approval to delay completion of program review must be requested from the AVP of Academic Programs and will not change the five-year review cycle. Programs that are late in completing the program review and have not received this permission will not be allowed to make substantive program revisions until their program review is completed.

B. Periodic review enables programs to reflect on the decisions that were made and whether the goals established have been achieved. It provides continuity in long-term planning. However, program assessment is not something that occurs once every five years; it is continuous. Program review should allow faculty to reflect on data gathered over the previous five-year period through a number of assessment methods.

C. The process of continuous assessment is defined at the academic Department level, but all assessment plans include methods for evaluating student learning outcomes, and whether the current curriculum is effectively graduating students who meet the Department's educational goals and objectives.

D. Academic Affairs will maintain the required schedule of five year reviews for each academic unit, developed in consultation with the School Deans, and will inform the Department chair, program chair, or coordinator when the time for program review is approaching.

E. The academic program review process consists of:

1. The preparation of a self-study document, incorporating all of the components defined in the self-study template approved by the Academic Planning, Assessment, and Resources Committee (APARC). This document is created after a period of participatory engagement in discussion and reflection among all faculty, staff, and students, a review of assessment data, and collaborative conversations about the direction and resource needs of the program.
2. Site visits and reports from external reviewers.
3. Review of the self-study draft and external reviews by the School Dean and School Curriculum Committee, including a written summary and response.
4. A review by the University Program Review Subcommittee, including a written summary a response/recommendations.
5. Submission of the final report to the Provost for review and action, and to the university community as a public record.

III. Program Review Self Study

A. The purpose of the self-study is to provide the faculty an opportunity for reflection and inquiry. The self-study document is the outcome of a process in which all members of the faculty reflect on the goals that were set in prior program reviews, gather evidence relevant to those goals, and collectively analyze that evidence to determine the Department's effectiveness in meeting the goals. Regular reflection and open inquiry into the effectiveness of the Department are necessary for the continued growth and health of the academic program.

B. The self-study document should describe the program's assessment plan as well as present evidence of the program's strengths and weaknesses. It should propose an action plan for changes that will improve the program in light of evidence presented.

C. A template for the self-study will be made available by the Academic Senate and the Academic Planning, Assessment, and Resources Committee to guide programs in writing the self-study document. The self-study process itself is led by the faculty and is most effective when it engages all members of the faculty, as well as staff, administrators, and students.

IV. Resources for Program Review

The university will provide the necessary resources for each academic unit to complete a meaningful and comprehensive review, and to engage in effective assessment. The resources required by the academic unit should be discussed and agreed upon between the Dean and the Department Chair.

V. External Reviews

A. The purpose of external review is to provide an independent and broad perspective on the program. The process requires at least one external consultant, to be nominated by the academic unit. Consultants should either hold faculty rank (or the equivalent) in the same or similar programs, be individuals of significant professional reputation in the field, or (in the case of an existing external accreditation board) be an official representative of the accrediting body.

B. The program faculty submits a list of potential consultants to the School Dean for approval. Selection of the external reviewer is made by the School Dean in consultation with the program faculty. The program faculty provides the consultant with a copy of the self-study document and other relevant materials for their visit. The program is also responsible for setting the itinerary and agenda for the visit.

C. The consultant is expected to submit to the Department a written report of his/her findings and recommendations within four weeks of the visit. Copies of these reports, and the program's response, will be included in the final program review document.

VI. Finalizing Program Review

A. The completed program review provides the basis for institutional action in oversight and support of its academic programs, as well as evidence in support of the institution's commitment to educational effectiveness, and the quality of its academic programs. To complete the process, the appropriate faculty committees and administrators review the self-study, supporting documents, and external review report(s), and work with the Department faculty and Dean to agree on outcomes and actions to be taken.

Step 1a: School-level Review
The self-study, supporting documents, external review report(s), and program response are sent to the School Dean and School Curriculum Committee (including SEIE Curriculum Committee when relevant) for review. The School Curriculum Committee will provide a written response and report explaining how the Department and its curriculum fit into the overall School's curriculum. The Dean will provide a written response and report explaining how the Dean has worked with the Department over the previous five years to help them achieve goals and priorities.

Step 1b: Graduate Studies Subcommittee (graduate programs only)
Program reviews involving a graduate program send the self-study, supporting documents, external review report(s), School Curriculum Committees' responses, School Dean's review, and program's response to the Graduate Studies Subcommittee (GSS) for review. GSS is to provide a brief written report that will be forwarded to the University Program Review Subcommittee (UPRS).

Step 2: University Program Review Subcommittee
The self-study, supporting documents, external review report(s), School Curriculum Committees' responses, School Dean's review, the program's response, and the report from GSS (when appropriate) are sent to the University Program Review Subcommittee. UPRS reviews the materials and, based on the evidence reviewed, writes a report detailing the major findings

and recommendations resulting from the evaluation. The Findings and Recommendations report (FAR) represents a cohesive plan of action for program improvement based on the program review documents. The draft FAR is forwarded to the program by UPRS. The program reviews the findings and recommendations and prepares a response either outlining plans for implementing the recommendations or detailing reasons for not doing so. The program's response to the draft FAR is submitted to UPRS for consideration in drawing up a final FAR. This is distributed to the program and appropriate administrators for action.

Step 3: Review by Provost and Agreement on Actions
Following completion of each program review and FAR, the Provost, Dean, and Department Chair meet to discuss the outcomes and the steps to be taken as a result of the review. From the discussion, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is prepared by the Department Chair, Dean, and Provost to establish common expectations for all parties in order to support the program's continued progress over the subsequent program review cycle. The MOU may also contain commitments for resource allocation.

Step 4: Archiving of Program Review Documents
Results of program review are shared with the campus and community by maintaining copies of all documents (self-study, external review report(s), Dean's report, final FAR, program response, and MOU) in a public location. Academic Affairs serves as the primary repository for all program review documents and makes these available on the appropriate website. Programs are strongly encouraged to maintain all documents in their Departments for reference.

VII. Program Review Outcomes

A. Although program review is conducted on individual programs, the Findings and Recommendations represent a source of information for institutions to link evidence of academic quality and student learning with planning and budgeting. Collating the information provided by program reviews provides an effective mechanism to guide institution planning and budgeting.

B. At the end of each cycle (academic year) of program review, UPRS submits a summary report to the Academic Planning, Assessment, and Resource Committee (APARC) on observed patterns and trends across programs, with special emphasis on common findings and recommendations.

C. Each year, APARC will report to the Academic Senate on the quality of academic programs and provide input on where additional focus may be required at the institutional level. This report will provide guidance for decisions such as re-sequencing of courses, refinements in the criteria for student evaluations, re-organization of instructional efforts, additional workshops for assessment or teaching, or hiring staff and faculty to fill current or upcoming needs.

D. The Educational Policies Committee (EPC) will refer to program review documents when considering proposals for course revisions, experimental courses, and other changes to a Department's curriculum. Program review documents provide evidence for the need for curricular changes; Departments that have not completed a program review in over five years may not be able to present adequate rationale or evidence for revisions to existing programs.

VIII. Combined Program Reviews

A. Each program required to undertake program review must be evaluated separately by the University Program Review Subcommittee. If a Department has more than one program (i.e., undergraduate and graduate, degree-granting and certificate, or others), the programs may be reviewed concurrently or separately. If reviewed concurrently, the Department shall prepare its report so that the components can be separated for individual assessment.

B. Any academic unit which is separately accredited by an external agency or accrediting body may request, with the approval of the School dean and consent from Academic Programs, to substitute an accreditation report as the basis for a program review. If such a report is accepted in lieu of a program review, certain questions or sections unique to the Sonoma State review process may be required in addition to the report. These requirements will be determined by UPRS in consultation with the AVP for Academic Programs. The program may coordinate the time frame it uses for its separate accreditation process with its SSU review.